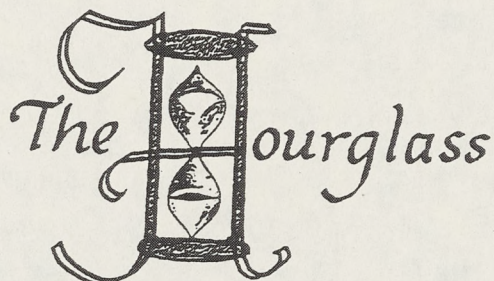


Historical Society of Palm Desert

P.O. Box 77

Palm Desert, CA 92261

(760) 346-6588



Community

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"THE SANDPIPER"

Compiled by V. Folkers, Curator

A small bird scurries to and fro along the ground on delicate legs, giving the roadrunner a run for his money in speed. This little guy's color blends in quite nicely with his background, which is probably a natural camouflage that protects him from airborne predators. The female builds her neat little nest on the ground and deposits her eggs; this too is not obvious to the casual observer. And so it was in the past, before progress touched and changed the desert.

Just so were the beginnings of a nest deposited on the desert sand in 1951, unbeknownst to Riverside County that this would become Sandpiper area. Palm Desert's first fire station was built on this plot of land along El Paseo donated for that purpose by Cliff Henderson. The volunteers had been holding down the job of protecting the young development from that dreaded destroyer – fire; but those with vision could see that the day was coming when professional help would be necessary to accommodate the growth of this community. The Historical Society of Palm Desert currently resides in the historic fire house on the fringe of the sandpiper's nest.

Today the 45 acres between Hwy. 74 and Painter's Path encompasses *The Sandpiper*, a development that began construction on a stretch of virgin desert with an inspiring backdrop of majestic mountains. Though we at the Society might not correctly say that we are perched on the edge of the Sandpiper's nest, we can certainly claim residence with our highly valued neighbors.

Back in 1957 the economic climate of the nation was anything but healthy. Despite this forecast the Western Land & Capital Company was thinking about a six million dollar development of "own-your-own" luxury apartments on this very same chunk of desert property. William O'Bryon, president of the firm, was encouraging investors to note the rapid growth of the desert, the great climate, the trend toward more leisure time, and the convenience of nearby golf courses.

When the dreams of the visionaries reflected a "green light," plans began in earnest to put the dream on paper and set them in concrete. Architects Palmer & Krisel were contracted to draw up this desert mirage. George M. Holstein & Sons would cause it to materialize, beginning with the building of 72 one-story units and having a count of 300 as its goal. Undergrounding power lines was a definite plus in enhancing the view. Potential purchasers of these first \$17,995 units could contact Jack Enders at Fireside 6-6156. Once purchased, owners were free to sub-let or resell at any time.

When the first unit was completed and the second one ready to open, a celebration was held which included the unveiling of a giant sculpture of a sandpiper. Bing Crosby, who was the Honorary Mayor of Palm Desert at the time, was a special guest at that party.

A raging fire in May 1960 gutted two of the then \$22,500 apartments and claimed the lives of two guests. The Palm Desert fire department requested Cathedral City's help to extinguish the flames. By 1966 the basic models ranged in price from \$30,730 down to \$23,311 and the resort complex was being billed as "The Desert's Smartest Address."

Controversy has been a part of the history of *The Sandpiper*. Three representatives of the Sandpiper Owners Association were trying to get the Sandpiper Management Company to do some maintenance and painting in 1964. The company filed an injunction in court to keep the owners from harassing them. The court denied the injunction, but put a temporary restraining order on the association. Later on, the McKeon Construction Company was trying to get zoning changes for the 56 acres south of Sandpiper. McKeon wanted to build high-density, low-cost, row-type apartments. Sandpiper residents felt that this would devalue their homes and the area in general.

A small building at the southwest corner of Hwy. 74 and El Paseo served as the original sales and rental office for Sandpiper, until it was relocated to a building near Gate "A" in 1968. It was used as Palm Desert's first city hall immediately after incorporation in November 1973. The building was razed in 1980, and by 1982 it had been replaced by a wall and landscaping at a cost of \$12,888.



photo by Julius Shulman

GIANT SANDPIPER SCULPTURE at *The Sandpiper*.
William J. O'Bryon (left), George M. Holstein III (center),
Bing Crosby "Honorary Mayor" (right) with paint bucket.

Though the giant sandpiper sculpture seems to have disappeared, *The Sandpiper* is still a vibrant resort consisting of 306 homes. Also included in the complex are 12 swimming pools, 6 tennis courts, 12 putting greens and 12 children's play areas. The price range is now \$82,500 to \$215,000 for 1000 to 2900 square feet of living space. For many residents it provides the leisure and warm climate that are not available in their home states. We at the Society are glad they chose *The Sandpiper*.



JEAN ROBERTSON ERNST

Jean was born in what she calls a "smallish town." New Ulm, Minnesota is located 100 miles southwest of Minneapolis-St. Paul. The residents were about 99% German, which is the language they spoke in their homes and in the parochial schools. Because her father's parents came from Canada of Scotch ancestors, she was a minority in that segment of the population. Jean and her parents were in agreement in that she wanted to be able to support herself and they wanted her to attend college.

When she heard of the medical technology program offered by Macalester College, Jean wasted no time in applying. After getting her education, she was holding down a job in Beardstown, Illinois. In November of 1943 she decided to try for a position in California which offered a much higher salary. What a surprise to drive into San Diego and see the barrage balloons hanging over the coast. She was a career girl for 10 years, working at Seaside Memorial Hospital and later at the Long Beach City Health Department, where she served in the medical section of the disaster preparedness program. Jean was also active in the California Association of Laboratory Technologists, Harbor Chapter.

After marrying a navy officer and having a baby, they moved to Palm Desert in 1963 to get away from the fog. They lived on Shadow Mountain Drive between Portola and San Luis Rey in an apartment complex known as "The Little Pentagon", which was built mostly by Jean's husband. Their daughter started first grade at Washington School with Jane Cameron as her teacher. From then on Jean participated in the Parents' Clubs as Donna advanced to Lincoln Middle School and then to Indio High School.

Girl Scouts was also a big part of Jean's life during those years. She covered various volunteer administrative positions in both the Scouts and the National Charity League. The first year the local Soroptimist Club presented a "Women of Achievement" award, Jean was honored with the second place presentation for her community involvement.

In 1973 Jean again entered the world of working women, taking a position as a bacteriologist with the Riverside County Health Department. Ten years later she retired. Since then she has held various offices in the Unitarian Fellowship of the Desert, and for ten years she was the President of the Corsican Villas Homeowners' Association. Again the Girl Scouts entered the picture by awarding Jean the "Thanks Badge," after which she represented the San Geronio Council locally for many years.

When her family first moved to Palm Desert, she remembers that the community was like a large family – she knew everybody. In order to buy clothes for her daughter, she went to Indio to the "Clothes Line." If she had no success there, it was necessary to get on the freeway and go to Palm Springs. Donna walked to school across vacant desert terrain and then made a cautious dash across Portola. All the time her mother was keeping an eye on her from their Shadow Mountain apartment.

Jean has been serving on our Board of Directors first as a one-person Sunshine Committee, and currently she is doing a great job as chair of the Volunteer/Docent Program. After all her community service over the years Jean's comment is, "I guess it is fitting for me to spend my 80s with the Historical Society."

NEW MEMBERS

Supporting: Beverly Somers Bergh
Nick Maffeo
Family: Blanch Autio & Pat Wyrwitzke
Robert & Modena Berger
Rick & Vickie Brown
Anthony & Donna Gomez
Robert & Carolyn Green
Alvin & Eileen Rickard
Individual: Ruth Ann Demos
Jan Faust
Trudi Greig
Eric Page

We Hold in Loving Memory
Eve Ownbey

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES mark your calendars

3-30-03 Annual Picnic
4-6-03 Springfest '03 Booth
4-9-03 Board Meeting
4-16-03 Spring Luncheon
5-15-03 Founder's Day

Booth at Springfest '03

Barbara Keedy Eastes is chairing this activity. This year the Society's booth will include five antique fire trucks dating back to 1934. There will be "bucket brigade" competitions for families and other children's games. Plan to stop by and participate. If you would like to help at this fun event, please call the office.

Annual Spring Luncheon

Jean Hollenbeck is the chairperson for this event. Please note that it will be held one week earlier than usual. The place is Desert Falls Country Club, and the time is 11 a.m. for the social and 12-noon lunch. Paul Ames will be our speaker. Joyce White will receive the "Volunteer of the Year" award. Make your reservations as soon as possible after receiving your invitation.

Education is what you get when you read the fine print. Experience is what you get when you don't.

Ed Mullins Memorial Picnic

This event is being chaired by Bud Lesser with the help of his side-kick, Carol Cole. See the enclosed flier for all the details.

Founder's Day

The 2003 Founder's Day award will be given to a couple, Dan & B.J. Callahan. They have been active in the community for years with various organizations, and most especially with the Historical Society and its Mini-Muster project. Lois Bradstreet is the chairperson and the lady to call (346-2947) if you can bake some cookies for us. This will be held in the Palm Desert Library conference room with open house from 3:30 to 4:30, and the ceremony will begin at 4:30 p.m. Plan to attend and spread the word to Dan & BJ's friends. The public is invited.

Thank You for the following Donations:

Book: *Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians*
by Virginia Waring.....Bill Waring
Map: Cahuilla Hills Plot Plan dated January
1948.....Dan Kelly
Letters: from Mr. & Mrs. Clifford Henderson
dated 1975 & 1976.....Edith Morrey
Fireman's Patch.....Wayne Calhoun
E.M.T. work shirt & California Forestry Book
1927-1976.....Joe Schneider

DOCENTS NEEDED

Jean Ernst is the chairperson for the Docent/Volunteer Committee. For the past months she has been working to get people familiar with the new exhibits at the firehouse. There are still some empty slots in her schedule and you might be the perfect person to fill them. Our present docents enjoy their contacts with visitors and the people who make up the daily routine at the museum. Please join us. Call Ann Tuttle at the office (346-6588) and tell her to put your name on Jean's list.

It's easy to be an angel as long as no one ruffles your feathers.

Wheels of progress aren't turned by cranks.

FIREFIGHTING EXHIBIT: If you haven't been into the museum since January 24, you have a treat in store. This display on loan from Bob and Carolyn Green reaches back in time, when fighting fires was not as sophisticated as it is today. It is interesting, informative, and even humorous – don't miss it !!

"THE SANDPIPER" EXHIBIT: Thanks to Jim West and Karen Prinzmetal, who are residents at this beautiful resort, we now have a great pictorial display showing the history of the development.

CLIFF HENDERSON EXHIBIT: How much do you know about the founder of Palm Desert? What was the first thing he built, and who else was involved? Come in and get the answers from one of our excellent docents.

Other things to see: Eisenhower's furniture, antique pump organ, sun-colored glass, C.V. Dickens Fellowship, photos & reference library, books & magazines, videos..... you name it – we probably have it.

For Sale: We have a selection of local books that you will certainly want to see; also, note cards, videos, T-shirts, etc.

NEW OFFICE HOURS

Monday / Wednesday / Friday - 10:00 a.m. till 3:00 p.m.

2nd and 4th Saturday - noon till 3:00 p.m.

THE MARCH THRU MAY MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

The groundwork is being laid for an additional 100 members to be added to the Historical Society's membership roster.

Team Captains are being recruited for this fun and fulfilling campaign. President Hal Rover and the Board recently discussed the possible awards to be given to the high individual recruiter and the high recruiter teams. If you want to be a member of one of the teams, contact Dick Folkers at 340-0828, or call the office at 346-6588 and leave a message.

Note: Even though we have teams, if each current member would bring in a friend or work associate as a new member, we would increase our membership and impact on the community.

Historical Society of Palm Desert

P. O. Box 77 - Palm Desert, CA 92261

Name _____ City/State/Zip _____
Address _____ Telephone _____

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Individual.....	\$ 20	Contributing.....	\$ 100
Family.....	25	Patron.....	250
Supporting.....	50	Life.....	1,000
Business / Organization.....	First Year.....\$ 75	Renewal.....	\$ 50

(Donations are tax deductible)

Bylaws Revision

The bylaws provide for alterations or amendments to be made by a majority of the members attending an Annual Meeting, if notice of the meeting contains a statement of the proposed alterations or amendments. You received the proposed amendments prior to our Fall meeting, and all were accepted with the exception of the following "revision to the revision":

Proposed Amendment No. 15:

All disbursements of the Society will require the signature of at least one officer, with larger expenditures requiring a second officer's signature. The threshold for two signature disbursements will be at the discretion of the board, to be determined on an annual basis.

Proposed revision to the above:

All disbursements will require the signature of at least one officer, for an amount not to exceed \$300.00. Expenditures over this amount will require the signature of a second officer, with the maximum amount requiring two signatures without board approval shall be determined by the board on an annual basis.

PROPOSED REVISION APPROVED _____

MEMBERS: Have you paid your 2003 dues yet? They were due on January 1. Please use the tear-off on page 5. Make check to: Historical Society of Palm Desert. Mail to: P.O. Box 77 - Palm Desert, CA 92261. Thank you.

Hourglass Editor,
Ginny Folkers

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